



Motivation to collaborate: Community organizations and universities working together

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Summary

This poster presentation explores the factors that motivate community partners to initiate and sustain their commitment to academic service-learning. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, we interviewed 10 staff members from community organizations that have partnered with a small, private liberal arts

university in the southeastern U.S. These organizations serve a wide range of community needs, from assisting children and adults who are homeless or living in poverty to providing health care services. We conducted hour-long individual interviews with one or two staff members from each organization who are directly involved in the partnership. Community partners discussed how they became involved with the university and what factors contribute to their motivation to continue this involvement. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and each interview was coded. The constant comparative method was then applied, allowing us to identify patterns across the transcripts (Roulston, 2010).

Participants reported that a key motivation in sustaining their partnership with the university is their goal of educating college students about community issues while addressing community needs. Consistent with the previous literature, staff members were also motivated to continue collaborating with the university as a result of such benefits as obtaining help with daily tasks and projects and forming relationships between students and the organizations' clients (Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tryon et al., 2008). The challenges to motivation in these partnerships included difficulties with scheduling, a need for more faculty involvement, and a semester time frame that provides too little time for genuine collaboration (d'Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2009; Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Tryon et al., 2008; Worrall, 2007). While these benefits and challenges directly impacted participants' motivation to continue such partnerships, staff members were not motivated by extrinsic incentives such as event tickets. Participants indicated that university courses that would enhance their effectiveness in their jobs, though beneficial, were not a primary motivator for collaboration with the university. They are motivated to meet the needs of their clients, educate college students, and improve the community.

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